

A SERIOUS PERIL TO HEALTH.

THE *Lancet*, from which the above title is borrowed, speaks out strongly respecting the danger to the public health arising from our ordinary mode of burial. It draws particular attention to the condition of certain Cemeteries within the Metropolitan District. These burial-places are pronounced to be replete with risk to such as are called upon to attend funerals no less than sources of peril to the neighbourhood wherein they are situated. Even the entire Metropolis is threatened. So imminent has the peril become that the chief organ of the Medical profession is compelled to urge the immediate intervention of the Secretary of State and the withdrawal of the Government licence.

Again, the Bishop of Manchester, as President of the late Social Science Congress, refers to the like peril. In his inaugural address special reference is made to our cemeterial system. "Cemeteries," he remarks, "are becoming not only a difficulty, an expense, and an inconvenience, but *an actual danger*." And this from two causes. One cause is the "choaked" condition of burial-grounds; the other, the practice of burying the dead in solid coffins. The revolting result is, as Mr. Seymour Haden testifies, that "decomposed bodies are kept in an ever-augmenting state of decay for an indefinite period, until they lie incapable of further change—a reproach to our intelligence, and a source of poison to the soil for any time to come."

Mr. Haden further shows how the danger we only now learn to recognize can be avoided. Effective burial, which signifies burial in *perishable* coffins*—such as are used by the Necropolis Company—and in suitable soil, constitutes the one thing needful. He thus writes: “Were the dead only properly buried not one of these evils (he enumerates several) would have any existence—not a single dead body would remain to infect the soil—and a quantity of land of incalculable value now hopelessly alienated would be liberated for purposes of hygiene or of utility.”

When Mr. Haden was permitted to visit a London burial-ground, which, with its contents, was about to be removed, he noticed among the interments of three centuries and a-half that “little difference as to condition could be perceived between the coffins of Charles II.’s time and those recently used, or between the coffins which were of lead and those which were of wood.” This is an important matter, inasmuch as the general public labour under the delusion that light-wooden coffins do not offer much resistance to the action of the earth. The contents of these coffins also, we are informed, were “intact, but putrid, unrecognizable.” Clearly, then, if we would avoid what may prove not merely a serious peril but a devastating plague, the “Earth-to-Earth” system of sepulture must be generally resorted to.

The Company assume the entire arrangement of Funerals, without the intervention at any stage of the proceedings of the ordinary undertaker; all that is necessary being, that, in case of death, notice of the event should immediately be forwarded to the Office.

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* It may not be amiss to repeat that the patent “Earth-to-Earth” Coffin combines the necessary strength and general appearance of a solid coffin.